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Daughter of the Rogues

Tale of the Rogue River Valley



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By RICHARD POSEY CAMPBELL

ASHLAND, OREGON

A Daughter of the Rogues

A Tale of the Rogue River Valley



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DEDICATORY

TO THE FEW WHO MAY CHANCE TO READ
THIS SIMPLE TALE, IT IS DEDICATED.

Should it give you a momentary glimpse into the wealth of America's scenic splendor, a taste for the great out-of-doors, a loftier ideal of the worth of true friendship, the beauty of an unselfish spirit, and the sacred purity of a love that would sacrifice all on the alter of its devotion, then this little story shall not have been told in vain.

DICK POSEY.

Dick Posey

A Daughter of the Rogues

I checked my jaded horse before a door
Where toiled an old man in his garden there,
And, much emboldened by his courteous smile,
Besought him that a weary man might fare
A day or so beneath his friendly roof.
“Aye, you are welcome in our home,” he said,
“There’s none to say he found no welcome here,
—My wife and I are both Virginia bred,
The latch string ever hangs from out our door.
But she is old and sick, our fare is plain,
So, for your comfort, I do not hesitate
To point you to the weary trail again,
Which, if you follow on for one brief mile,
Will lead you to the ‘Squaw Man’. He, I know
Can give you food and shelter, and he will,
For he is kind,—leastwise I find him so,
Though some there be that say he is morose
And does not mingle with them. Even so,
He is my friend. And then, his squaw is good
And passing fair as Indian women go.”

I thanked him kindly, for I could but feel
’Twas even as he said. My horse trudged on
And ever as we went I felt the spell
Of gorgeous landscape meeting sky of June,

Dick Posey

The rugged mountains, Cascades, Siskiyou,
Green garbed in all the splendor of the spring,
And, at their feet the Valley of the Rogue,
Sweet with blooming trees and birds that sing.
And as I sensed it all with quickened breath,
I laughed to feel the surge of rich, red blood
Within my arteries. No longer Death
Lurked in my footsteps. The dry, expanded air,
The breath of resinous woods, the simple food,
Cooked all unaided by some mountain stream
And plucked from Nature's hand by gun and rod,
The rugged out door life,—all these
Had strengthened me and given zest to life
And banished death to three score years and ten.

And as I rode thus musing on the trail,
My eyes uplifted to a beauteous range
Of foothills stretched between two sentinels,
—Grizzly Peak and Roxy Ann, a sudden, strange
Twist of fate, such as does sometimes enter
Into life's circle and warp and change us
Till life whirls around another center,
Took shape before me in the form and face
Of one most dear to me, my boyhood's chum.
—For many months I'd reckoned him as dead,
Yet there he stood before me, wild-eyed, dumb!
While a mighty continent lay between

Old Hudson's banks, where both were born and bred,
And Oregon, where both this miracle had seen.

"Why Phil!" I gasped, "and what in heaven's name"—
"Old Jack as I'm a sinner!" Wild surprise
Thrilled in our voices as with firm clasped hands
We looked with glad content in friendship's eyes.
We talked as only pals can talk when they
Have much in common, friends at home,
And all the changes wrought, marriages, deaths,
Our boyhood pranks and how I chanced to come
Away out here into this rugged land.
And ever as we talked it seemed that he
Avoided self, would grasp me by the hand
Anew and shake it with fevered fervor,
Telling me o'er and o'er how glad he was
To find me there, how we would scale those hills
And whip the streams far up the Siskiyou
For trout, the like of which I'd never seen.
He knew the haunts of elk and deer and bear;
Where mountain quail and grouse and pheasants used;
—We'd rest a spell, then he would take me there.

And thus he gabbled till, in self defense,
And spurred on by a mountain appetite,
I cried, "Desist old scout, pray lead us hence,
Bold Daniel Boone, pathfinder of the Rogue,

Dick Posey

I've a hunger keen as a cross-cut saw,
I feel that I could ravenously devour
A grouse or deer or grizzly bear blood raw.
My venerable Virginia friend back there
Spoke of a mighty chieftain hereabout,
Where I might find refreshment and great ease
Within his teepee, and I have no doubt
But that I should have found him somewhere near.
He lauded this great squaw man to the skies,
And added that his squaw was passing fair.
But, ere I test their hospitality,
I fain would taste your salt, O comrade mine,
So, lead on to your camp fire ere I swoon,
We'll talk of our adventures as we dine."

I'd thus railed on while easing up the cinch
On my spent horse, and noting that he said
No word in answer, I glanced toward my friend
And stared aghast! He stood with bowed head,
Nor could he speak nor meet my wondring gaze,
The droop of shame sagging his shoulders down,
While o'er his face the color came and went
And left him pale. 'Twas pitiful, I own,
To see this idol of my earlier life,
The toasted hero of athletic field,
Captain and leader of each college strife,
The polished favorite of the drawing room,
With pride of social rank and stainless birth,
—Thus like a felon sentenced to his doom.

Dick Posey

"Philip, old friend," I grasped his nerveless hand,
"If I have said in thoughtless strain one word
To stamp upon your brow this show of pain,
Forget it, Phil, consider it unheard.
This love of ours is far too great a thing
To let some empty word, but idly sped
In senseless railery, though barbed with steel,
Stalk through the echoing halls of friendship dead,
Nor would I probe the secrets of your past,
I do but ask your trusted friendship back."
With head still bowed, but in a firmer tone
He answered me, "I am the 'Squaw Man', Jack."

Small wonder that he shrank from decent gaze!
I knew the breed, treacherous and bestial,
Reeking in filth, their squalid, stinking tents
Swarming with mangy dogs and insects vile.
But still I loved him and I told him so.
That is my way, when once I find a friend
And take him to my bosom, his virtues
Overbalance far his weakness in the end.

With scarce unbroken silence he led me by
A winding path to where his cottage stood.
It was a winsome spot and sweet to see,
With madrone grove casting its shady flood

Dick Posey

O'er velvet grasses sprinkled thick with flowers,
And, trellised over door and window pane,
Were flowering vines most beautifully arranged,
And scattered round, roses of every name.
I caught my breath in wonder at the scene,
"Beautiful," I said, "it takes my breath away."
He smiled most gratefully, "Well, I am glad,
For it is yours as long as you will stay."
He led me to a shaded rustic seat,
And, going to a spring house near at hand,
Came back to me with pitcher brimming o'er
With choicest beverage of any land,
—Rich, creamy milk, the nectar of the gods!
Seating himself beside me he began
Unasked:

PHILIP'S STORY.

I wish to tell my story first,
I'll try to finish with it if I can
Ere she returns—my wife—I mean. She's gone
To visit some sick baby and may come
Within the half hour, and it is not well
That she should hear, for, well Jack, there are some
Things that I would not have her know, for she's
Sensitive and I would not give her pain
If I can help it, for she loves we well,
As she has proven o'er and o'er again.

I think it is not needful that I tell
About my life before I came away,
—My change of fortune in one single stroke
That left me stranded, and I need not say
To you what sank me deepest in despair.
God, how I loved her, Jack! And then to have
Her cast me from her life without one tear,
—Hurl back upon me all the love I gave!
Of course, her purse-proud people doubtlessly,
(For that she loved me some I am convinced),
O'er ruled such passion as she felt for me.
But when in cooler moments I did pause
And weigh the matter calmly in my mind,
I know I'd not have asked of her to wait
Till I, without experience, might find
A way to fortune. So, without much care,
I sold the few securities I found
Left floating in the wreck, and such small things
As I no longer needed, that abound
In the apartments of a bachelor.

I found 'mongst all my friends but very few
I cared to bid farewell. Strange how such things
Can change one's nature so, but it is true.
I left, not knowing whither I should go,
—Just wandered aimlessly from place to place,
Did such small jobs as I could find to do
To eke out the small pittance in my purse.
But ever as I went I traveled west,

Dick Posey

Ever I kept my face turned from the spot
Where I had suffered so, and it seemed best,
For constant change would buoy my spirits up.
No labor was too menial for my hands,
—Was just content to breakfast, dine and sup.
No use to weary you with dull detail
About my journey 'cross the continent,
You've covered the same route, so please review
Your own experience and be content.

One day I'd ridden far across a stretch
Of dreary sage land, shimmering with heat.
My grub was spent and I was parched with thirst
And near exhausted, for I could not eat
Such food as I could buy from Indian hoard,
—You've seen the breed and know the reason why.
For weary hours I'd watched a line of trees
That cut across the plain, unerringly
Betraying to my eager, famished gaze
Sure signs of living water, and, perchance,
A rabbit or sage hen or speckled trout,
—Refreshment seasoned with the sauce of chance.
I reached the stream near sunset and had but
Alighted from my horse to ease the load
Of pack and saddle from his aching back,
When suddenly from out the shade there strode
A graceful buck, with sleek and shining coat.

Magnificent he was and fair to see,
Proud monarch of his realm of trackless plain,
Clothed in true grace and untaught dignity.
One moment did I note the splendid form,
And then with silent reach my rifle found,
When with good luck and but a single shot
I lay the antlered monarch on the ground.
With exaltation high I cast aside
My rifle and unclasped my hunting knife
And in a moment I was bending o'er
My prize, so lately full of joyous life.

Of course, the act was rash and did betray
My utter ignorance of huntsman's lore,
And, since Experience is a teacher rare,
Who oftentimes must wield the birch before
We are well schooled to battle with this life,
It happened thus I learned my lesson there.
For scarce the tender throat had felt the sting
Of knife point reaching for an artery,
E'er my prone supper, with a sudden spring,
Had hurled me backward with such graceful ease,
—And then he charged me, maddened with his pain,
Enraged beyond endurance with the keen
Sense of hatred for his foe. 'Twas in vain
I tried to reach my rifle where it lay,
He was upon me like a rifle shot!

Dick Posey

I took the impact of his antlered head
Upon my shoulder, and I felt a hot
Pang where the frontal prong had pierced my flesh,
And though it caused an ecstasy of pain,
It brought a sense of clamness to my mind,
—I must meet force with force, instinct with brain.

I grasped the mighty antlers of the beast,
—Full three feet did they spread from tip to tip,
And, bending to my foe's impetuous lunge,
We tested strength to strength. 'Twas well my grip
Was strong, my tendons hammered into steel
Back there on college campus in my youth;
'Twas well I'd bent the oar of bounding shell
That sped old Harvard into fame again;
'Twas well I'd sucked the keen breath of the plains
And fed from bounteous palm of Nature's hand;
My entire life seemed shaped and focalized
To meet this champion of a rugged land.

A spell we stood transfixed with muscles taut,
Each feeling for some weakness in his foe,
When suddenly he reared and, striking out,
The sharp edge of his hoof cut keenly through
Thick leathern "chap" into the flesh beneath,
And I could feel the warm blood trickling down.
'Twas then my manhood left me, and the brute

Dick Posey

Of ancient forbears claimed me for its own.
I glared into his eye with bestial hate
And met defiance in his maddened stare,
I tried to break his neck with sudden twist,
And wrenched it till he squealed and bellowed there;
I caught his blood-flecked lip between my teeth
And held on like a bull dog; he swung me round,
But I forestalled his trick and held him down.
Then back and forth we struggled, inch by inch,
His antlers biting deep into my chest,
My clothing torn to ribbons, but I dare
Not loose my iron grip upon him, lest
He strike me down to death. We struggled on,
I felt him tremble with the awful strain
Of twisted neck and vital wound within;
His breath came hot and labored, while again
I tried to break his neck by artful twist
But found my strength near gone; my ears drummed loud;
The universe seemed tumbling into chaos;
My brain reeled dizzy with the stress of blood;
My mem'ry rolled backward like an endless chain;
I viewed my past as does a drowning man.
And in that blurring vision shone the face
Of her I loved, and as the vision ran,
It seemed she mocked me, yet she spurred me on;
I felt my senses going, the dark shroud
Of blank oblivion was settling down,
When I, in wonder, did but feebly sense

Dick Posey

A shiver through his form, a smothered groan,
Then near at hand a sudden sharp report
Of rifle,—then darkness came upon me.

I woke to sweet sound of gurgling water
That taunted my parched thirst to agony,
And when my eyelids lifted I saw dimly
An Indian maiden bending over me.
“Me wantum drink,” I gasped; “heap thirsty, sabe?”
She pressed my own cup brimming to my lips,
And then I swooned again within her arms.

I wakened to soft touch of finger tips
Upon my brow, and when she saw that I
Was conscious, she placed me upon the ground.
“You’re better now,” she said, “the worst is past.”
Her voice was low and gentle, and I found
Her English pure as mine.

“I humbly crave
Your pardon, lady, but I thought—you—were—”
I stammered. “Indian? Well, I am,” she said,
“Or partly so,” and then I looked at her
And knew she was a “breed.”

Her splendid strength
Sustained me as I struggled to my feet,

And stayed me as I climbed the sloping bank
Down which, unaided, she had borne my weight.
My prostrate foe lay where he had fallen,
While on the carcas worked an Indian crone,
Hideous, toothless, eager at her task.

"I wish to thank some one for my poor life.
I feel, beyond a doubt, I need not ask
Who fired the shot that robbed my valiant foe
Of well earned victory, so I thank you."

"Pray no," she answered with a glint of mirth,
"That I did slay him, I admit is true,
But then we needed meat. My granddame there
Counts this but a godsend, and if you find
It in your heart to claim it, I pray you not,
She's all I have,—and—sometimes—she is kind."

I found my wounds most painful. Ere many steps
I settled down once more upon the ground,
And lay there 'twixt a torpor and a swoon.
She bathed with water cool each painful wound
And 'tended me with graceful skill and soon
I felt the strength come back into my veins.
She helped me up and unresistingly
I followed to their lodge, 'twas very clean
And wholesome, and, old friend, it seemed to me
A paradise compared with what I'd seen

Dick Posey

For many months.—A couch of wondrous ease
Refreshed my tortured body, and a cool
Draught of refreshing wine from vines and trees,
Sweet with wild honey, and the soft, cool touch
Of woman's hand, refreshed and soothed me to rest

That night my wounds grew fevered and I raved,
And for some days I hung 'twixt life and death,
But ever I could sense a woman near.
And sometimes I would wait with bated breath
Till she bent over me, then I would grasp
Her hands, pour out my love entreatingly,
—Gabble the silly nonsense of my youth,
Thinking she was the one most dear to me.

Abundant health, clean blood and tender care
Soon yielded me my strength in partial meed.
The food was wholesome,—fish and venison,
Wampus, a sort of bread made from ripe seed
Of swamp lillies, most pleasing to the taste,
Wild fruits, honey and roots dug from the earth,
—All poured out richly in this favored land,
And, to these simple folk, of priceless worth.

* * * * *

One day we two were seated by the stream,
The Indian maiden, Niona and I.
In answer to her earnest questioning

Dick Posey

I told her of my life, and eagerly
She listened as a child would to a tale
Of fairy land, so little did she know
Of this great world outside her simple life.
Then in return, I felt it right to show
An interest in her and asked that she
Would tell me of her past. At first she shrank
And hesitated to confide in me.
And then in simple candor, modest grace,
She told me of her life. And O, my friend,
'Twas pitiful. I could but blush in shame
And loathing at my own race in the end:

"My people on my mother's side were 'Rogues,'
A warlike tribe that ranged these rugged lands,
And fought your people till you crushed them down
And tore this rich realm from their bloody hands.
Perhaps 'twas best my mother's tribe should die
And be naught but a memory,—a dream.
We simple folk but fail to understand
The many ways of Providence, and why
The weak should ever bow before the strong.
They fought the white man for the right to live
Their simple lives in their own simple way,
But they were crushed and, dying, did but give
Blow for blow, defiance against strength
And passed in bitter hate, as was their way.

Dick Posey

"My granddame there was married in her youth
To a white hunter of the Hudson Bay,
And when my mother lay upon her breast,
A new born babe, he left them there alone
And ne'er returned,—perhaps 'twas for the best.

"They tell me that my mother's face was fair,
Her form was comely, and she grew in grace
And beauty as the seasons came and went.
I never could recall her form and face,
She died when I was but a little child.
But oft my granddame talked of her to me.
She grew to maidenhood amid the wild
Environs of our tribal life and ways,
And many of her kind did try to win
Her hand in marriage in her youthful days,
But e'er it seemed the white blood in her veins
Would cry aloud for mating with its kind.

"One day there came a white man to the camp,
Handsome and bold, and 'twas not hard to find
A welcome, for he carried treasures rich
And dear to Indian hearts, and found his way
Into their simple confidence with gifts
That cost him little. And day by day
He traded with them, giving beads for pelts,
And knives for skins of otter, perchance a gun,

Dick Posey

Powder and ball for priceless sable fox.
Thus to his gain their confidence he won.

He gained my mother's heart as easily
As I thus pluck this poppy from its stem,
And they were married by our simple rites.
It seems that peace and comfort dwelt with them
For many moons, he ever was most kind,
And she enthroned him in her woman's heart
And, bowing down, she worshipped at his shrine.

But then it chanced a white man came to camp
With letters for my father, and he grew
Restless and morose, yet yielding ofttimes
To fits of tenderness, as though he knew
Her for the priceless treasure that she was
Whom he much feared to lose. And then one day
He bade 'Farewell for but a little while'
And left her with her tribe and went away
And ne'er returned to her,—then I was born.
"She died within a twelvemonth from my birth,
—Sank peacefully to rest one bright spring morn
Ere my frail lips had learned to lisp her name
Or memory stored the image of her form.

"I grew apace, as healthy childhood grows,
Basking in sunshine, buffeted by storm,

Dick Posey

Scaling bold heights or tramping many miles
The pathless forest, for I knew no fear.
But as I grew, the children of my age
Avoided me and oftentimes would sneer
And call me 'Paleface,' for they understood
The blood of two white men flowed in my veins,
So I was outcast from hate of alien blood.
I brooded much alone and nursed the hope
My father would some day return to me
And take me with him out into the world,
—But he has ne'er returned.

“My friend, I can not see
Why he should bring me to this harsh cold world
And leave me here alone. Nor could I tell
Why a just God, in whom I've learned to trust,
Who ever guards and loves the sparrow well,
Should thus forsake me when I've done no harm.
I now but hope my father may be dead,
I find no comfort in the thought that he
Still lives, yet gives his flesh and blood no bread
Nor comfort of his presence and his love.

“One day, a missionary, passing by,
Did find me weeping in my loneliness,
And, by his questioning, and kindly eye,
Won my young trust to him so that I told
Him of my childish griefs. He heard me through

And talked to me in gentle, kindly way
Till I had bared my whole life to his view.
Ah, he was kind and tender! and he wept
At my poor sorrows, and I knew that I
Had found a friend.

“He took me to his home
And there I lived three happy, blissful years.
He taught me, what I know, and O, the joy
I found in many books!—no heartaches, fears,
Nor taunts nor bitter hatreds flung at me
Because of hated white blood in my veins.
And then I came to know that God is just,
And though we suffer much, His strength sustains
Us till at last 'tis measured back in joy.

“It seems that keenest pleasures soonest end
As brightest sun but speeds the coming shower,
—One autumn night death robbed me of my friend.
He left me all his books and such small store
Of simple furniture as you have seen
Within our lodge, but richer, dearer far,
He left a memory with me like a green
And fruitful land, that has enriched my life.
And given me a hold on better things.

Dick Posey

"I tarried at the settlement a while,
Taking such gifts as fickle Fortune brings,
And in the main they were most kind to me,
Yet soon I missed his kind protecting care.
They knew that Indian blood flowed in my veins.
And I soon sensed the chasm stretching there
Between the outcast and her father's race.
And then one day—I drained the bitter dregs
Of outraged womanhood and shame,—I need
Not tell you all,—but one did offer me
Black insult, for he knew I was a 'breed.' "

"I struck him fiercely on the lips, then fled
Back to my native tribe, but soon I knew
There was no welcome for me, even there,
Then Granddame brought me to this spot, and you
Now know Niona's history."

She paused

And I could see the look of weary pain
Upon her face, and understood how she
Had suffered while living o'er her life again.
I felt a soft splash on my hand and knew
My eyes were wet from pity of the child.
I spoke no word, for feeble words ne'er do
Convey the sense of feelings deeply stirred,
So I but pressed her hand in sympathy

Dick Posey

And lingered by her side, while each was touched
With sympathy for each.

Then gently she
Did look into my eyes and ask that I
Should tell her of the one I deeply loved,
And who did not return my love, and why
I still should love her so. And then I knew
I'd babbled in my tortured, fevered dreams.
And so I told her all, as brothers do
With sisters whom they feel that they can trust.

"And yet you love her, when you know that she
Returns it not—or measures it with gold?"
She asked. I did not speak, but silently
I bowed my head. "And, friend, is there not one
In this great world that you do know so well,
Among the many women you have known,
Who, knowing you, would love you for yourself?"

I felt my spirit suddenly recoil
As if it were profaned. "No, no, my friend,
I can not lift my love from virgin soil
Where it is rooted, and with careless hand
'Transplant and fix it in another life,
You have not loved or you would understand,"
I answered.

Dick Posey

“You would still make her your wife
If you had gold in plenty and could give
Her priceless jewels, robes of richest hue,
And all the things most precious in her eyes,
If these would win such love as hers to you?”
I did not speak to her but knew that she
Had read the answer in my eager face.
Then she arose and beckoned me to come,
And silently I followed from the place,
Still haunted by the picture she had drawn
And conjured out of nothingness for me.

How long we walked I know not, but at last
She paused within a canyon. Silently
She pointed upward where a stream did leap
From lip of precipice through giddy space
And, caught by playful breeze, it broke in spray,
Tumbling and bounding in the merry race
For lower levels. And it chanced the sun
Topped the high hills and sent its piercing ray
Through sparkling prisms, dancing in mid air,
And Lo! a rainbow spanned the narrow,
Robing Niona with celestial light.
It was a scene most beautiful, my friend,
'Mid all the wonders of this wondrous land,
And she was beautiful, 'twas not till then
That I did sense the comeliness of her,

—Her artless grace and unspoiled maidenhood,
And had my heart been free and unpossessed
I think I could have loved her as she stood.

“Aha! you’re standing at the rainbow’s end,
And where’s the pot of gold, my lovely queen?”
I cried with sudden happiness of heart,
Caught from the strange, wild beauty of the scene.
“And shall we play at fairies, friend of mine?”
She cried, “Your fate is resting in my hand.
And shall I beckon goblins from their haunts,
Or summon fairies with my willow wand?
Now, since I will to you your heart’s desire,
’Tis thus Niona brings you back your love.”

She swept apart the bushes at her side
And motioned me within a little cove,
Formed by the arching of great jagged rocks.
The place seemed spectral in the dim half-night
And I did not note Niona’s face shone pale,
And that her eyes seemed burning with the light
Of fierce fires kindled deep within her soul.
“My friend, the rainbow ended here,” she said,
And, pointing down, “Behold your pot of gold.”

And there it lay! a tempting, gleaming mass,
Pure virgin gold, full freed by Nature’s hand

Dick Posey

From rotting quartz! My wildest boyhood dream
Had never pictured fabled wealth so grand.
And as my greedy eyes devoured the scene,
I marked the ledge 'tween walls of porphyry
Clearly defined, noted the timber there
Ready for use, nor did I fail to see
The cataract that bared its brawny arm
To crush the golden quartz with fist of steel,
—All this I noted as I stood there dumb.
And then, half dazed, I felt the gentle touch
Of trembling fingers, and Niona's voice
Seemed faint and distant as if overmuch
The mental strain had sapped her strength away:

"And is Niona's gift enough," she breathed
"To win your love back to your empty arms?
Is it enough to fill her heart with love
And add true passion to her many charms?
Is it enough to deck her in rich robes,
And hang rare jewels on her snowy breast?
If it but brings true happiness to you
Niona is content her friend is blest."

I looked into her earnest, candid eyes,
Whence shone her soul in pure transparency,
And knew my image rested in her heart.

Of course, I loved her not, but just to see
A love so pure, unselfish, she would give
Herself, her soul, her all with bleeding heart
To let my poor, mean, selfish passion live.
—My friend, it was a glimpse of Paradise.
And though my early love yet fettered me,
I knew my soul would ne'er be satisfied
With aught but glad, unselfish love for me.

And then I told her that I could not take
This rich gift from her hand, and idly go
Through life in wealth and luxury and ease,
While she no happiness nor peace would know;
That her sweet unselfishness had put to shame
The memory of her whom yet I loved;
That, had the wealth she offered me been mine
By right of honest toil, her act had proved
I ne'er could be content with purchased love.

She said but little and we left the spot
With scarce a backward glance, and all that night
I wrestled with the problem of our fate.
I could not leave her thus, I had no right
When she had saved me from a brutal death,
And, from the fullness of unselfish love,
She gladly offered me her new found wealth,

Dick Posey

—To build my life upon her broken heart.
Jack, I could not leave her thus, nor could I
Ask her to leave her lodge with me unwed.
I thought of marriage, but I held the tie
Too sacred.—Then to think of child of mine
Who must endure the taint of Indian blood!
And my imagination conjured up
Tales that often I had read in boyhood,
Of how a hybred breed would oft revert
To darkened skin or bestial savagery.
—And then Niona's sad, sweet face would come
Before my mental vision, silently
Rebuking all my selfish fears and doubts

Next day I asked the child to marry me,
—To link her life with mine that we might go
Away together, and explained that she
Need but to love me as a brother true,
And she would be a sister by my side,
To cheer and comfort me. And I did pledge
To be her faithful brother and abide
With her the same as if my parents' blood
Flowed in her veins, and hold inviolate
Her maiden purity, and she should
Be the sister for whom I'd ever yearned.

At first she wept and said it could not be,
Her Indian blood would ever hold me down

Dick Posey

To her own level; that men would call me
"The Squaw Man"; that the time might come when I
Would look upon her with a sense of shame,
And that would break her heart and wreck my life
And cast a blight upon my father's name.
I reasoned with her long and earnestly,
Telling her that never should I return
To childhood home, for none was left there now
To comfort me or for my presence yearn,
Till finally she yielded her consent.

Next day we sought an agency nearby
And found a missionary well content
To earn a marriage fee, and we were wed.

Niona's granddame seemed quite reconciled,
Taking with greedy hands the gifts I gave,
Happy and eager as a little child
To bid farewell and go back to her tribe.

We harvested Niona's yellow gold
With eagerness frail words can ne'er describe.
The lust for it seems born within us, and
Where e'er it tracks its yellow, gleaming trail
Man grasps for it with clutching greedy hand,
Though it should lead him to the jaws of Hell.
We marked the ledge and measured off our claims
As I had learned in camp.

Dick Posey

No use to tell

You all or weary you with dull detail,
Inside a month a princely fortune came
Within our hands. We settled in this spot,
And here we still abide, even the same
As when I married her, a sister, she,
And to keep my pledge I faithfully have tried.
But often I do feel the bitter sting
Of deep humiliation, not of my pride,
But that I know how keen she feels the pain
When neighbors, thoughtless, but with fair intent
Do call me "Squaw Man", and it is in vain
I tell her that it matters naught to me,
Yet she will often brood alone and weep,
Thinking it fault of hers that I must drink
The wormwood of humiliation deep.
Ah! Niona."

And she was standing there.

Queenly she was and very fair to see,
Straight and well rounded as the mountain pine,
Her eyes like moonless midnight, and the free,
Easy poise of her, and womanly grace
Of form and feature made a picture rare,
Well graven in my heart. And now that I
Do look back from ripe age and see her there,
And though the fires of passion burn but low,

Dick Posey

I feel anew the same sweet, thrilling charm
That drew my soul to her, I know not how.

He called her to us and in kindly words
He named me as his nearest, dearest friend,
Asking her kindly welcome, which in grace
And simple dignity she did extend.

I found their home a cozy little nest
Filled with comfort such as ample means afford
In frontier Oregon, and O! the rest
And luxury of easy couch; and food
Prepared by woman's hand; and the dear
Memories of home; the scent of flowers
In radiant glory; the sweet atmosphere,
Fragrant and clean rinsed through resinous boughs;
And, spread before us in beauty unsurpassed,
The Valley of the Rogue, bedecked in all
The radiance of summer, and the vast
Stretch of encircling mountains, like a frame
To wondrous picture from the hand of God.

Much have I wandered in my earthly span,
Many a foreign land my feet have trod;
I have gazed on Alpine beauty, Egypt,

Dick Posey

And sacred Palestine, where God came down
From central realm of Universal Space
And took man to his bosom as his own;
I've scaled the lofty Andes of the South
And left footprints in the Himalayan snow
But ne'er a spot on earth compares with this
Sweet Valley of the Rogue, where ever blow
Zephyrs laden with the smell of flowers,
Softened in winter by the ocean's breath,
Cooled in midsummer by high altitudes
Where lurk eternal snows in mountain cleft.

And so the happy days slid by like happy dreams
In happy childhood, and we three drew near
Each other, as do souls in intimate
And congenial intercourse, grow yet more dear.

Philip made good his promise and we spent
Long days in keenest sport with rod and creel.
And O, the joy of casting tempting fly
Into some shaded pool! and then to feel
The surge of unseen life with startled plunge,
Try to escape the thing that checks its speed
And binds it to some enemy it fears!
With joy we note the singing reel and head
The bend of supple rod, and rush of line
'Neath burning finger. Sudden it doth break

The glassy surface of the pool, and high
It leaps into the air and tries to shake
The hook from aching throat, then down once more
Into its native element, and yields
To unknown skill it cannot understand.

Niona told us of a lake that wields
A fearsome spell upon the Indian heart.
It lay upon the crest of the Cascades,
Deep sunk within a cavern, and 'twas said
No warrior is so brave but he evades
The weird enchantment of the awful spot,
Lest demons that disport beneath the wave
Will clutch his soul and pull him down to Hell.
Nor durst they even look upon it, save
In winter when 'tis crusted o'er with ice,
Which holds the demons prisoned down below.
'Twas known among the whites as "Craker Lake",
And we arranged a pilgrimage to go
And view this wondrous work of nature's hand.

I find not space within this humble tale
To tell to you the glories we beheld.
And had I space, my puny words would fail
To lift the canvas from God's masterpiece.
We threaded forests where the giant pine

Dick Posey

Rose smooth and limbless for an hundred feet;
We mounted granite pinnacles to find
New undiscovered glories spread beneath,
Around, above us, far as eye could reach,
Which we could but behold with bated breath;
We stumbled upon dazzling silver lakes,
Smiling in sunlight,—one that I recall,
“Lake of the Woods,” folded in Woodland arms,
—An artist’s dream, rare jewel of them all;
And then the luxury of evening camp,
Pitched hastily on brink, of murm’ring stream,
And then the banquet of the wilderness!
The sizzling venison, delicious steam
Of fragrant coffee,—diet of the gods!

—Speak not to me of gilded banquet hall,
Where wealth and beauty grace the glit’tring board,
Where glint of gems on snowy bosoms call
A challenge to the gleam of radiant wine,
Where softened music like a pleasant dream
Steals on the sated ear in strains divine;
But, kindly spread my banquet ’neath the trees,
With tried and kindred spirits clustered ’round,
Where wealth of intellect and grace of soul
And trusted friendship ever may be found.

And, should we look for gleaming jewels there,
Just look above, each incandescent star

Gleams from its sapphire setting in the sky
And spreads its brilliant radiance from afar.
And music? Listen to the waterfall;
The chirp of homing bird in glad content;
The hum of insects; note of night-hawk's call;
The whispering trees;—all form one instrument,
Which, swept by velvet touch of summer breeze,
Makes one vast, sobbing melody sublime,
That lulls us into slumber 'neath the trees.

* * * * *

Early one morning, wading deep in snow,
As dazzled eyes did meet the sun's first rays,
We topped the frustum of a mighty cone,
The object of our tramp of many days.
'Tis but a remnant of the loftiest peak
That in past ages graced the Cascade Range,
Ere smothered gases, deep within the earth,
Biting igneous walls, did feel a strange
Blast from mighty furnaces below,
And suddenly igniting, loosed the strength
That shook a hemisphere from pole to pole;
Then upward leaping through the blackened length
Of vast volcanic throat it tore its way,
Shaking the mountain from its base to crest
In a mad rush toward the light of day;
Till shortened radius could no longer hold
The force within. The mountain burst in twain.

Dick Posey

Its mighty apex leaping to the sky,
And then a deluge of infernal rain
Of fiery lava scorched the helpless earth.

And when in time, the pre-historic sun
Peered through the rifts of vapor, it beheld
A ruined mountain. And 'tis thus was won
The rock-ribbed resting place of Crater Lake.

Straight down below our eyes two thousand feet
Trembled the surface of this wondrous lake.
It lay there slumbering in its bed, replete
With unearthly beauty, its sapphire hue
Richer by far than blue of summer skies.
And as it dimpled to the wind's soft kiss,
New shades and colors met our hungry eyes,
And fleecy clouds, hung lazily above,
Were mirrored back in all their beauty rare;
And warrior eagle, soaring in the sky,
Shrieked angry challenge to his reflex there.
And, cheat of human vision! It but seemed
A scant two miles across from brim to brim,
But when you chain its vast circumference,
Full twenty miles it measures 'round its rim.

And then, the sweetness of its solitude;
The patience of the Hand that set it there;

Dick Posey

The deep blue of the arching sky above;
The vigor of its clean, pure atmosphere,
—All stamped upon my soul indelibly,
To dwell with me through all eternity.

We pitched our camp beside an ice cold spring
That gushed from rocks in crystal purity,
And there we dwelt for many happy days.
We climbed new heights, gained different points of view,
Thus adding to the scene in varied ways.
And ever did our hearts respond in warmth
To richer friendships springing up between.
And gladly did I note the tender care
That Philip gave Niona. It was e'en
My fondest hope that some day her sweet grace
And womanly devotion would awake
Within his heart the love of man for wife,
—The richest earthly gift from God we take.
For that she loved him deeply I did know,
Although she simply asked a sister's part
Beside him in their cordial, friendly life,
But yet another image filled his heart.

I often ponder in these later years
On the strange riddle of this human love.
'Tis but a tangled skein in clumsy hands,
My fingers meddling with what Fate has wove.

Dick Posey

I knew the one who still ruled Philip's life,
Selfish, fickle, with but scarce a thought
Or care for all life's grander, nobler things.
And then to see the one whom Fate had brought
Into his life,—fit queen for any king,

Ah, could but love as that have touched my life,
Wedded to me in purity and trust,
With all the sweet intimacies of wife
And husband, cementing our lives in one!
Then, by God's grace, to feel the gentle touch
Of baby hands, helpless yet strong as steel,
Binding our souls with thankfulness o'ermuch,
I should not now, at three score years and ten,
Mourn for the wife who never had been mine,
Nor feel this lonely void of empty arms.

One day while we were basking in the shine
Of faultless summer, a neighbor came to us
To look upon the beauties of the lake.
He tarried through the day and won our hearts
With his gay bant'ring, and we did take,
With welcome from his hand, a goodly store
Of venison. His wife was Indian bred,
And through her rights he'd taken up rich lands.
And he urged that Philip, since he had wed
An Indian, should profit by the law

Dick Posey

And file on lands adjoining his domain,
And by united effort in much ease
They'd win a fortune to their mutual gain.
'Twas through a neighbor's kindness that he spoke
But I could see the sudden droop of shame
And flush of wounded pride on Philip's face
At thought or mention of the hated name
Of "Squaw-man." And Niona at my side
Grew rigid, and 'twas pitiful to see
The look she bent on Philip, and to note
The travail of her soul in agony.
And when the man had left us we did feel
That suddenly, the spot that charmed us so,
Had lost its spell upon us, and we planned
That early the next morning we should go
Back to the ease and comfort of a home.

After the sun had set I left the camp
To take a last view of the wondrous scene.
I clambered down the rocky trail til I
Had reached the margin of the lake, but e'en
Its wondrous beauty failed to touch my heart.
I watched the summer moon rise pale and white
O'er all before me, and the loveliness
But added to my sense of solitude.
I pondered deeply on the ways of Fate,
Trying in vain to sound the fickle mood

Dick Posey

In which she chose to hold two lives apart.
I looked into my heart and knew that they
Were both most dear to me, and hoped that I
Had found like favor with them and hoped the day
Would come ere long when I should see them wed
In soul as well as by the laws of man.
Possessed of wealth surpassing all their needs,
With honesty of purpose toward each, and
With wealth of intellect to take a grasp
Upon the richer, nobler things of life,
It seemed to me a union, blest indeed,
—The mating of a manly man with one
Possessed of all to fill life's cup with joy.

And thus my mind did wander on and on,
Conjuring up a dream that pleased me much,
When I should find sweet comfort in their home,
Seated with them around the glowing hearth,
While children of their love, perchance would come,
And clamber on my knee in friendliness.
I pictured them out in the world of men,
Where he by right of character should dwell,
And she could have her chance among them. Then,
My lazy fancy saw her standing by
The one that robbed her of a husband's love,
And I could see Nicna's splendid form
Well robed in fashion's fancies, see her move

Dick Posey

In queenliness among her kind, and how
Her eyes would sparkle in the brilliant light.
—Pictured her hair, black as a raven's wing,
Her rounded bosom aglint with jewels bright,
And smiled to see the other's feeble charms
Sink into nothing by Niona's side.

I took a farewell glance upon the lake,
Then, looking up, I saw a dark form glide
Out on a jutting crag that overhung
The hungry waters full three hundred feet.
My pulses chilled, for there Niona stood
In silhouette against the sky. Then sweet
Her voice came floating to me through the gloom,
The voice she lifted up in prayer to God:

“Father above, in whom I've learned to trust,
Who knowest the stony path my feet have trod,
If thou canst hear me, listen to my prayer.
Naught do I ask that Thou shouldst give to me,
But, from the fullness of a breaking heart,
I plead that Thou wilt take the misery
From Philip's life, that he may lift his head
Among his kind, nor feel a sense of shame.
Father, I love him so! May sweet content
Dwell ever with him, and grant that his name
May lose the stain my mother's blood has wrought.”

Dick Posey

Her voice was drowned in weeping for a spell,
And I could see the look of agony
Upon her face, as e'en my own tears fell,
I durst not move, lest I should startle her,
—But one false step and she would plunge to death
I could but wonder why she chose such spot
For her devotions—then with gasping breath,
I felt a cold fear clutch my leaping heart,
And all my blood seemed to congeal within.
Then, lifting up her face to Heaven, she sobbed;
“Forgive Niona, if this be a sin.”

Light as an arrow from the hunter's bow,
She plunged head downward into empty space.
The giddy distance stretched its hungry arms
And folded her in cruel, still embrace.
Straight as a shaft she cut the stagnant air,
It writhed and shrieked and whistled 'round her form;
Its restless fingers loosed her glorious hair
And tossed it streaming backward like a shroud.

There come strange moments in these lives of ours,
When we no longer sense the flight of time;
When seconds lengthen into endless hours,
And destinies are moulded in a breath.
Such moments come to us in stress of soul,
On that strange border line of life and death.

Dick Poser

'Twas thus it seemed Niona checked her flight
And hung transfixed and balanced in mid air.
—'Twas then I knew I loved her—that her life
Was precious to my heart and dearer far
Than Mother, Soul or hope of Heaven—or wife
Or child, that future years might hold for me.

I struck the water just as Niona's form
Plunged deep into its cold transparency.
I'm but a feeble swimmer, in my youth
I scare could swim a hundred yards unspent,
And there, the icy waters of the lake,
Fed by the melting of the vast snow banks, sent
Shafts of cold pain along each startled nerve.
It seemed I held it naught that I should die,
I knew I could not bear her to the shore,
But by some power I could not fathom, I
Held life as naught—What difference if I found
A resting place within that crystal lake?
One moment's pain, and then forgetfulness;
Then, very soon, my spirit would awake
And, tossing the waves aside, take its flight
To realms prepared for me, I know not where.

I reached the spot where she had disappeared,
And, treading water, I sustained me there,
Though all the demons, born of Indian creed
Seemed to unite their strength to pull me down.

Dick Posey

It seemed to me a torturing stretch of years
I peered into the depths. At last there shone
A paler radiance—'twas Niona's form
Coming to me with outstretched hands for aid.
God! how I loved her—not as man for wife,
But with a passion that is fixed and staid
Deep in the unknown chambers of the soul;
A love that knows not time, content to wait
Till, somehow, somewhere, earthly things have passed,
Eternity unrolls the scroll of Fate,
And love, untrammelled, comes into its own.

She broke the surface at my side as calm
As though she sought but pleasure there alone.
“Why did you come to me, my friend?” she asked,
I gasped, “You must not die a suicide!”
And then the waters with their icy hands
Twisted and cramped my flesh until I cried
Aloud in pain and writhed in agony,
My muscles twisting into knots like steel,
—The demons of the lake had mastered me.
And that my time was short, I could but feel.
“Go back to Phil, his love will come to you,
Good-bye!”

I scarce had sunk when her firm hand
Did drag me back, and soon with steady stroke
She bore me, weak and helpless, to the land.

Dick Posey

We said but little—little could be said.
My blood reacted with a healthy glow
And very soon I was myself again.

Silently we climbed the rocky, steep ascent,
Pausing at times to ease the constant strain
Of o'ertaxed muscles, our garments steaming
From the heat within, till at length we stood
Safely upon the brink of the abyss.
We gazed a moment on the moonlit flood
That had released us from its icy grip,
While strange emotions cast their silent spell
Upon us. Then she took my outstretched hand;
"This night will live through all eternity,"
She breathed, "I do not claim to understand
The link that seems to bind us, each to each,
But this I feel: so long as souls shall live,
We shall dwell ever near, sustaining each
With age-long friendship that we both shall give."

Next day we started on the homeward trail.
We took a different route that led us down
Rogue River, with its wild meanderings,
Swollen by snow-fed streams, that sprang from frown-
ing mountain chasms, gorged with perpetual snows.
We fought great salmon waist deep in the stream

Dick Posey

Till our poor horses groaned beneath the load.
And ever as we wandered it did seem
We found new beauties, richer than before.
I'll ne'er forget old Mount McLaughlin, grand,
A perfect cone, crested with dazzling snow,
Stern sentinel, o'erlooking all the land,
Nor Roxy Ann, of a more modest mien,
Green robed and restful to the weary eye.

We reached our home, tired and travel worn,
And grasped its comforts with a grateful sigh.
And then we whiled the lazy weeks away
With rod and gun in hunter's paradise.
And ever would we happen on strange sights,
—New wealth and beauty did constantly arise,
—Mineral springs, with gases deftly charged,
Gushed from the earth with power to ease and heal
Many of the infirmities of man.

The mountains had entrancing tales to tell;
For miles we traced the coast-line of a sea
That once had beat high up their rocky sides.
From Grizzly Peak to Roxy Ann did we
Trace it by shells imbedded in the rocks.

Niona told us of a wondrous cave
Deep in the forests of the low Coast Range,

And though the way was rugged, yet it gave
Full measure of reward for effort spent.
We found the entrance in a vast ravine
And pitching our camp we took well earned repose.
Next day we entered. 'Twas a tomb-like scene,
And beautiful beyond description. Far
As our dim candles sent their rays, the walls
Of purest marble glittered in the light,
And tossed back myriad echoes to our calls.
We clambered through scant fissures but to find
Entrance to new wonders. Clear stalactites,
Inverted cones, pendant from ceilings high,
While from the floor arose great stalagmites,
Gleaming like cut glass in the candle light.
In one recess we found a table spread
With gorgeous napery, spun from snowy white
Threads of crystaled carbonates; and white swans
Floating in crystal pools; and tubes of glass
Which, at an artist's touch would send forth strains
Sweet as the notes of sirens as they pass;
And bedoirs furnished in rich draperies,
To tempt the weary traveler to repose;
A "Curiosity Shop" filled with toys
And trinkets; the white lily and the rose
Blooming in scentless beauty, side by side;
And everywhere our candles' flick'ring rays
Kindled rich flames of colors, magnified,
Diffused, into bewildering hues and shades.

Dick Posey

And then, there was the waters' ceaseless drip,
Shaping forms and fancies with patient care,
Nor note of time, while years, unheeded, slip
On silent wings into the fading past;
And then, the denseness of the quietude,
With naught to break it but the crystal drop,
Building, ever building, in solitude!

We spent two days in this bewilderment
Of marble caverns. With ladders improvised
From slender saplings, and with our lariats
We scaled high walls to find new wonders, prized
For the great effort their attainment cost.
We found it vain, even to estimate
The vastness of the subterranean halls.
I think that time will prove, they permeate
The entire mountain with a tangled skein
Of fissures, labyrinths and lofty domes,
—Mile upon mile of quaintest fairyland.

In after years when eagerly man comes
To probe the secrets that lie hidden there,
With pick and powder he will drive his way
From room to room, enlarging narrow halls,
Bridging deep chasms until at length they lay,
In all the mysteries of hoary age,
Open to the world's inquiring gaze.
—A wondrous story written in the rocks.

* * * * *

We pitched our camp within another maze
 Of mountain wonders. Ashland Creek, with all
 Its many wanderings down a stately gorge.
 It springs from melting snows amid the tall
 Pine clad cliffs, and e'en from the very crest
 Of old Mount Ashland, robed in dazzling white.
 Ne'er in all my wanderings had I beheld
 A stream like that. Had I but words, I might
 Paint a pen picture that would faintly show
 Meager glimpses of varied beauty there.
 Step above step, thousands of cascades rise
 'Tween grassy banks studded with flowers rare,
 The water whipped to foam in tumbling flight;
 And gray squirrels chattering on leafy boughs;
 The whirr of mountain quail from hidden nest;
 The chirp of robins and the call of grouse;
 And oftentimes it chanced a clumsy bear
 Took sudden fright and fled from hostile man;
 And deer, so plentiful and unafraid,
 They e'en would almost feed from outstretched hand,—.
 We chanced upon a cougar, red with blood
 Of spotted fawn the creature had just slain;
 And high above us on a ridge appeared
 A band of elk, marching in stately train
 Upon their beaten trail. And everywhere
 Sylvan retreats offered alluring shade,
 Tempting us to kindle our camp fires there.

* * * * *

I stood upon Mount Ashland's lofty crest,
 Niona at my side, to watch the sun
 Rise from its golden couch beyond the hills.

Dick Posey

We saw the shadows lift, and one by one,
The mountain peaks were tipped with liquid gold;
The shades of night went racing to the west
And all the higher places smiled to greet
This daily miracle from out the east.
First, Shasta rose, shaking night's sable robes
From brawny shoulders, snowy crest held high,
Shaping the outline of his giant bulk
In silhouette against the streaming sky;
Then the new born day in bouyant glee
Caught old McLoughlin in its warm embrace
And planted a kiss upon his glowing brow;
And next old Baldy showed his pallid face
From nightly vigils o'er the "Marble Caves;"
Then Grizzly, Roxy Ann and Pompadour
Shouldered into view; and then the valley
Glowed in the splendor of the morning hour.
It was a view well worth the arduous climb
Through darkness up the steep and rocky trail.
And stays impressed upon my memory
Where loftier views in other climes but fail.

Niona spoke: "I'm glad I live, my friend,
And, but for you, I should not now be here.
Can you discern those rim rocks jutting out
To right of old McLoughlin? It was there
I tried to leap into forgetfulness.
I do not feel that 'twould have been a sin,
As 'twas for Philip's sake and not for mine,
But, O, this life is sweet, if but to win
Moments like these from out our little span.
But I was sorely tried that I should be

Ever a shame and burden to his life.
And, had I died, my friend, can you not see
That, with his gold, Philip might e'en return
To her who rules his life and buy her love?
And then at times I feared that I should lose
Control of my weak self—my heart might move
In answer to an impulse, and the fear
Was ever present and I trembled lest,
Forgetting I had but the sister's part,
I throw myself in passion on his breast.
And so I thought 'twas best, but as I fell
I saw you leap to rescue me, and then
I must not let you lose your life for mine,
And so I came back to my—more than friend."

"Niona, dear, I feel that you do know
Philip and you are both most dear to me,
—I wish you both life's fullest meed of joy,
And 'tis my fondest wish that you should be
Wedded to each by all the sacred ties
Of wife and husband; but, Niona, child,
You must pay the price—'tis not hard to pay."

She looked at me, her features glowing wild
With new born hope. "Must pay the price," you say?
You know that death for me holds no alarms,
—Could I but know his love for one brief breath,
I'd gladly die next moment in his arms.

Dick Posey

"But then, Niona, death is not the price,"
I answered, "I shall only ask that you
Think less of him, a little more of self.
Men are strange creatures, child, they often do
Love but the more when they are loved the less.
And if a wife would bind her husband by
The strongest ties to her, she will not give
Her every thought to him, nor will she die
To prove her deep devotion and her love.
These earthly loves of our not divine.
We think 'tis love when perchance, 'tis but pride.
And, while I have not mastered all the fine
Twists and turns of human character, I
Have seen how men appreciate a wife
As she appears to others. If she dress
In taste most exquisite, and shapes her life
To social needs and life's proprieties,
And wins much admiration—and some hate,
Her husband will compare her many charms
With those of others, and will often rate
His own salved pride as the profoundest love.

"I trust you know me well enough to feel
I would not stoop to idle flattery,
So, to your sober judgment I appeal.
Your charms of form and feature are above
Those of the average woman; your carriage
Is natural and full of unspoiled grace,
While you have much advantage in your age;
Your hair is ample for the dressers' art,
And you have wit and buoyancy of mind,
And you are glowing with abundant health.

Dick Posey

Now, given opportunity, I think you'd find
A way to master the small intricacies
Of fashion and society's demands.
And then your ample bank account would win
You envied rank where nobler arts would fail,
So listen to me, child, 'tis this I mean;
That you and Philip should forsake these wilds
And travel among strangers for a while.
And you should study people and their ways,
Their modes of dress, and each eccentric style,
And all their little courtesies, and try
To school yourself in all, so that you may
Mingle with Philip's kind and be at ease.
I trust to your good sense to find your way
Among them, and to your true modesty
And womanly virtue to profit much,
And yet retain your honest self esteem.
I know that Philip loves you, and that such
Love as his, when it does appreciate
You, and comparison reveals to all
Your own true self, your unaffected charms,
The scales from his blind eyes will one day fall.

"I know the one who, for so many years,
Has held his heart within her jeweled hand.
I will not talk of her, but this I feel;
If it but chanced that some day you should stand
Beside her, after you had learned the ways
Of her own kind, and you were richly clad
In all the latest follies of the day,
Her puny beauty would look pale and sad
Beside you. You are fairer, far, than she.

Dick Posey

And should you mingle in the busy throng,
But very few would even note a trace
Of Indian blood within you, and so long
As wealth and beauty are your portion here,
'Twould add but romance to your many charms.

"Now as to Philip, it is for his good.
You practice no deceit, but simply bring
The worth of your true self within his view.
I know him well, his life is pure and clean,
And when his love comes full and complete to you,
'Twill ever there abide till death shall come.
And do not once forget, you are his wife
And he your husband, and your duty stands
To him, to drive a false love from his life
And claim the heart which he will gladly give,
And which is yours in honor and in right.
I am your friend, and also Philip's friend;
I do not urge you thus in thoughtless, light,
Unripe words, but with all the keenest sense
Of my devotion to you both, my friend."

Long did we talk, weighing the matter well
In all its subtle points, and in the end
She promised, if Philip but deemed it best.
And we did pledge to each that we would keep
The secret 'tween us till our dying day.

That night I talked with Philip in the deep
Quiet of our mountain camp, urging him
To do his duty by Niona, to
Remove her from the land where she had known
So much of pain, where joy was but her due.
That she should have her chance to win a way
Among her father's people, and to see
The world and try to make its ways her own.
And 'twas not long before I knew that he
Did see his duty to her, and his high
Sense of honor did make his duty clear,
And he consented, if it were her will.

I tarried but a few days longer there,
Then, with regret, I bade my friends farewell.
I will not weary you in labored words
With all the details of my journeyings
Through lands whose mystic history affords
Substance for volumes weightier than this.
I threaded far into the somber shade
Of redwood forests, wondrous to behold;
I climbed old Shasta's slopes and proudly made
My camp fire high in never melting snow;
I spent some weeks in grand Yosemite,
Drinking its marvels with a greedily thirst;
I dropped into the valleys but to see
Marvels of soil and wealth of spreading plain,
While everywhere was rioting of flowers,
Fruits adrip with luscious sweetness, gay birds,
Shrieking their gladness to me,—golden hours,
'Neath radiant sky of endless summer!
I often pitched my camp with brawny men

Dick Posey

Bearded and massive in efficient power,
Pitting their strength against the great day, when
Their eyes would see the yellow, gleaming hoard
Within the palm of Fortune's outstretched hand.
And I have answered to the magic spell
With pick and shovel in the tempting sand,
And I've e'en felt the reeling, drunken joy
Of glowing nuggets in my itching palm.

I stood one eve and watched the blood red sun,
Robed in fleecy vapor trappings, and calm,
Sink to repose beyond the Golden Gate.
I'll ne'er forget the scene. It seemed that God
Stood at the portals of a continent,
Watching the path that few as yet had trod,
With hand most provident to wayward man,
Spread open and palm downward o'er the land,
From which had dropped his richest earthly gifts,
—Ah, why will men forget to bless that Hand?

* * * * *

Two glorious years passed by and one day found
Me seated in my club in calm content.
I found it good to tread the beaten paths
Of old familiar ways, where I had spent
My youth and early manhood, and to clasp
The hand of half forgotten college mate
And know that I was only half forgot.
I spent much time in pondering of late
O'er Philip and Niona, conjuring up
The many scenes through which we three had passed,

Dick Posey

Wondering how wayward Fate had dealt with them,
And whether they had heeded me at last.
I smiled to think that I, a bachelor,
Should turn match-maker between man and wife,
Stepping boldly "Where angels feared to tread,"
—I, with ne'er a romance in my life.

As I thus mused alone, a messenger
Placed a dainty note within my hand,
And thus it read:

 "To my dear old friend, Jack:
Just read of the wanderer's return, and,
Fearing lest you might flit away again,
I hasten to forestall you in the act.
I thus command that you forthwith forsake
Your musings, and your presence I exact
This very night. A few congenial friends
Will congregate beneath my humble roof
To hold high jinks. My lord and master lends
His voice in this request, vowing that he
Gladly forgives those school day tragedies
That you and I enacted long ago.
And by the by, I know that it will please
You much to learn that our old mutual friend
And pal, Philip, will be here, big as life.
And O, Jack, listen now, and hold your breath;
He's found a wondrous creature for a wife!
—Picked her up somewhere out in the great West,
And she's bewildering the hearts of men
In giddy old New York. Perhaps 'twere best
Not to expose you to her dazzling charms,
Lest she inscribe you on her length'ning scroll

Dick Posey

Of conquests,—but you'll know that she's Phil's wife,
—And may the Lord have mercy on your soul!
Will look for you promptly at nine.

Irene."

With fevered haste I leaped into a cab
And rushed to my apartments. Such a scene
Had ne'er before disturbed the stately calm
Of poor old Sam. I ordered him about
With lordly tyranny and tempting bribes,
And in a moment we were tumbling out
Relics of by-gone times when I had donned
The gay accoutrements of beau ideal,
Nor recked their ancient cut and moth ball scent
While in anticipation I did feel
The wine of social contact in each vein.

Promptly at nine Irene's smile greeted me,
In cordial welcome to her home. Her reign
In social realms was undisputed, and
"Flower of beauty and chivalry were there."
I readily gained her consent to seek
Concealment behind a flowery screen where
I could see and seeing, not be observed.
The form and face of some familiar friend
Greeted my eyes where e'er I bent my gaze,
And it was good to feel my stirred heart send
A glow of friendly warmth through nerve and brain,
While Memory unrolled with lightning hand
Her scroll, leading me back to earlier scenes again.

Dick Posey

There Philip stood in his gigantic strength
And manly vigor, prince among his kind,
Greeting his old time friends with firm hand clasp
And cordial courtesy. 'Twas good to find
Him in my eyes, and to discern that he
Was mingling with his friends in glad content.
I saw him pause and bend above the chair
Of her who once had ruled his heart, and sent
Him from her life with scare a thought or care.
And closely did I watch for trace of pain
Upon his features, but he stood at ease,
Giving courteous heed to some inane
Speech springing from the shallowness of her.
And then I saw him straighten, and his eyes
Turn from her and, watching, I saw his face
Soften and glow as if in glad surprise,
And following his gaze, I there beheld
Niona. She had but caught Philip's smile
And look of adoration, big with pride,
And gladly did her sweet soul answer, while,
Making excuse to those around, she arose
And moved toward her husband.

She wore the grace
Of stately pines bowing to gentle kiss
Of summer breeze, while stamped upon her face
Was the enraptured look I oft did note
The while she gazed upon some master scene
Of God's own handiwork. I caught my breath
In admiration of her. In fancy e'en
I saw her back among the hills and vales
Of the sweet Valley of the Rogue, where they

Dick Posey

Had sunk their bigness deep within her soul.
And now her glorious form in rich array
Was very pleasing to the eyes of men.
Her rounded bosom, answering to the sway
Of deep emotions, lifted its weight of pearls
Gleaming in tangled rays of fires within,
Her eyes, bright as the stars of western night,
—And my glad heart breathing her beauty in.

She turned her face direct toward my retreat,
And e'en as if in answer to her call,
I went to her. At first she stood transfixed
In wonder at my presence, and then all
That we had been to each swept over us
And I did take her outstretched hands in mine.
"My more than friend," she breathed, "I'm happy, Jack."
I saw her lips a-tremble and a tear did shine
Upon her lashes, and then dear old Phil
Descended swift upon me, and we three
Forgot all else around us for a spell.
—Then others came and struck glad hands with me,
And happily the evening hours passed by.

Philip and I were standing side by side
When I did note that, all unconsciously,
Niona stood beside that other one.
I could but smile that my poor dream should be
Thus fully realized. The swift intake
Of Philip's breath did clearly prove to me
That he beheld the contrast 'tween the two.
"Look," he whispered, "never before have I

Dick Posey

Seen earthly beauty that will equal her.
And, friend of mine, there is no need to try
To tell you of a husband's love and pride
In such a woman as Niona there."

"And how about the one beside her, Phil?
Time was when I suspected you might care....."

—"Blind was I, Jack, stone blind and deaf and dumb!
When Heaven's gates stood open wide for me,
I saw them not; and when the angels sang
And beckoned me to enter and be free,
I heard them not. 'Tis true—I know not why."
I felt my friend's big hand within my arm
And read his cordial meaning in his eye;
"Come, Jack, I want you to myself awhile."
He drew me out and up a winding stair
Into a dim lit chamber. With a smile
He led me to a canopied retreat,
And there in silken nest a baby lay,
Sweet as an angel in his innocence.
I looked in Philip's face and knew that they,
Husband and wife were bound eternally,
Not only by their honor and their love,
But that the fingers of their first born held
Their spirits, "Twain as one." I heard a sob,
And there Niona stood, and I did see
A tear drop on her snowy bosom fall,
That paled the radiance of the jewels there,
And peace came down and sweetly dwelt with all.

THE END.

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